

# On the Chinese Words of “Broccoli” and “Cauliflower”

## Background

In Koala's video, he mentioned that in Chinese, the words for “cauliflower” and “broccoli” are the same. The context is that in PvZ2C and PvZ: EE, there both exist a plant called 大力花菜 (大力 meaning “strong/powerful” and 花菜 referring to the real-life plant that the in-game plant is based on) that is evidently ported from the former to the latter. In the former, it visually resembles a broccoli due to its green colour, and in the latter, it resembles a cauliflower as it is white instead. This means that 花菜 refers to both cauliflower and broccoli, leading to the conclusion that cauliflower and broccoli share the same Chinese word.

Several viewers in the comment section then pointed out that it is not the case, proposing the argument that the Chinese words for the two vegetables are different.

This passage argues that, 花菜 as an independent phrase refers to cauliflower, but 花菜 can also be an abbreviation of the Chinese name of broccoli.

## Disclaimer

The writer:

- Is in no possession of all advanced Chinese botany dictionaries/sources;
- Is neither a botanist nor a linguist;
- Aims in this passage to only study mainland China Mandarin and mainland China simplified Chinese usage, since the games involved are made for and by those from mainland China, and that other Chinese-speaking regions or other linguistic/political dialects of the Chinese language can use different words when referring to different matters;
- Emphasizes that PvZ2C has collaborated<sup>1</sup> with a significantly more experienced individual<sup>2</sup> regarding the origin of in-game plants<sup>3</sup>;
- Does not claim to have reached an unanimous and definite answer to this topic;
- Reminds the reader that it is the games, PvZ2C and PvZ:EE, which first used 花菜 to refer to both kinds of vegetables; and
- Defines “broccoli” (西|蓝/兰/藍/蘭|花, 青|花菜/菜花| or |绿/綠||花菜/菜花|) as “floret of *Brassica oleracea* var. *italica*” and “cauliflower” (花椰菜 or 椰菜花) as “*Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis*,” according to *Britannica*,<sup>4 5</sup> due to the confusing definitions of the three major online English dictionaries, as shown in the table below:

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<sup>1</sup> Post by official PvZ2C account. <https://t.bilibili.com/995799566440726549?tab=2>

<sup>2</sup> Biography page of Professor Lu Baorong on the website of Key Laboratory of Biodiversity and Ecological Engineering, Fudan University, Ministry of Education.  
<https://ecology.fudan.edu.cn/f2/a8/c30054a324264/page.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Post by official PvZ2C account. <https://t.bilibili.com/969269905674207254?tab=2>

<sup>4</sup> Article of broccoli on *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/plant/broccoli>

<sup>5</sup> Article of cauliflower on *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/plant/cauliflower>

| Definition of “broccoli” and “cauliflower” in the online dictionaries | Oxford English Dictionary                                   | Merriam-Webster Dictionary   | Cambridge Dictionary  |
|---|---|--|---|
| Broccoli  | <i>Brassica oleracea botrytis asparagoides</i> <sup>6</sup> | Cauliflower or <i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>italica</i> <sup>7</sup> | Broccoli, cauliflower or <i>Brassica oleracea</i> in general <sup>8</sup> |
| Cauliflower   | <i>Brassica oleracea botrytis cauliflora</i> <sup>9</sup>   | <i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>botrytis</i> <sup>10</sup>              | Cauliflower <sup>11</sup>   |

## Collected Materials

An online Chinese dictionary, zdict.net, says 花菜 is cauliflower.<sup>12</sup>

漢語大詞典 on 古音小鏡 documents that 花菜 is a common name for cauliflower, while also pointing to 3 other plants that begin with a colour adjective and end in 花菜.<sup>13</sup>

*Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae* documents both *Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis* (cauliflower as defined previously)<sup>14</sup> and *Brassica oleracea* L.<sup>15</sup> having the common name 花菜, with the latter having the Chinese name 野甘藍, which is not a phrase used to refer to cauliflower or broccoli in Chinese. Chinese Wikipedia provided *Brassica oleracea* var. *sabauda* as the Latin name of 野甘藍<sup>16</sup> with a contradictory source.<sup>17</sup> It also provided about 20 other plants which end in 花菜.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Search result of “broccoli” in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=Broccoli>

<sup>7</sup> Search result of “broccoli” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/broccoli>

<sup>8</sup> Search result of “broccoli” in the Cambridge Dictionary.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-traditional/broccoli>

<sup>9</sup> Search results of “cauliflower” in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=cauliflower>

<sup>10</sup> Search results of “cauliflower” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cauliflower>

<sup>11</sup> Search results of “cauliflower” in the Cambridge Dictionary.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-traditional/cauliflower>

<sup>12</sup> Description of 花菜 on zdict.com. <https://www.zdic.net/hans/花菜>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.kaom.net/book\\_hanyudacidian.php](http://www.kaom.net/book_hanyudacidian.php)

<sup>14</sup> Page of *Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis* on *Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae*.

<http://www.cn-flora.ac.cn:28080/plantonline/plantonlinesite/toDetailPage?plantId=2ea70ed823c34f8884a44213f7d54e4b>

<sup>15</sup> Page of *Brassica oleracea* L. on *Flora Reipublicae Popularis*

*Sinicae*. <http://www.cn-flora.ac.cn:28080/plantonline/plantonlinesite/toDetailPage?plantId=624b7c85a9844bb5bbbf6668c7b929d>

<sup>16</sup> Chinese Wikipedia article of 野甘藍. <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/野甘藍>

<sup>17</sup> Page of *Brassica oleracea* L. var. *oleracea* on Scientific Database of China Plant Species, cited by the Chinese Wikipedia article of 野甘藍.

<https://db.kib.ac.cn/CNFlora/SearchResult.aspx?cpni=CPNI-184-14035>

<sup>18</sup> Search results of 花菜 on *Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae*.

<http://www.cn-flora.ac.cn:28080/plantonline/plantonlinesite/toListPage?queryAcContent=花菜>

Chinese Wikipedia articles of cauliflower says it's also known as 花菜,<sup>19</sup> while saying broccoli is also known as "green/light green 花菜" (绿花菜/青花菜).<sup>20</sup>

Baidu Baike articles of cauliflower<sup>21</sup> and broccoli<sup>22</sup> also suggest so, whilst the latter also links to a thesis<sup>23</sup> which refers to broccoli as "light-green 花菜" (青花菜). An officially commissioned<sup>24</sup> supplementary video made by 顾有容, a doctor in botany from the Chinese Academy of Sciences,<sup>25</sup> linked by the Baidu Baike article of cauliflower, says it's common to refer to both cauliflower and broccoli as 花菜 or 菜花.<sup>26</sup>

*Chinese-English-Latin Names of Fauna and Flora* listed 菜花 and 花椰菜 as "cauliflower" and *Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis* with no mentions of 花菜.<sup>27</sup> 绿菜花 and 青花菜 are listed to have the English and Latin names "broccoli/head cabbage" and *Brassica oleracea* var. *italica* respectively.<sup>28</sup> However, according to *Britannica*, "head cabbage" refers to *Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*.<sup>29</sup>

The Unicode Emoji List<sup>30</sup> only has a broccoli emoji, with the CLDR Short Name of "broccoli" and other keywords including "broccoli," with no "cauliflower." Yet, when typing 花菜 on iOS or iPadOS devices, the broccoli emoji is suggested.

## Conclusion

花菜, in mainland China Mandarin, on a strict sense means cauliflower, but it can also refer other vegetables, including broccoli.

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<sup>19</sup> Chinese Wikipedia article of cauliflower. <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/花椰菜>

<sup>20</sup> Chinese Wikipedia article of broccoli. <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/青花菜>

<sup>21</sup> Baidu Baike article of cauliflower. <https://baike.baidu.com/item/花椰菜/246746>

<sup>22</sup> Baidu Baike article of broccoli. <https://baike.baidu.com/item/西蓝花/401535>

<sup>23</sup> 韦艳萍. (2017). 青花菜的特征特性及高产栽培技术. #现代农业科技(17), 2.

<sup>24</sup> 顾有容's channel description on Baidu.

[https://author.baidu.com/home?type=profile&action=profile&mthfr=box\\_share&context=%7B%22from%22%3A%22ugc\\_share%22%2C%22app\\_id%22%3A%221661570864730169%22%7D](https://author.baidu.com/home?type=profile&action=profile&mthfr=box_share&context=%7B%22from%22%3A%22ugc_share%22%2C%22app_id%22%3A%221661570864730169%22%7D)

<sup>25</sup> Baidu Baike article of 顾有容. <https://baike.baidu.com/item/顾有容/24556603>

<sup>26</sup> 《菜花和包菜是一家?西兰花一直被叫错?看完终于明白菜花选哪种!》<http://baike.baidu.com/l/iNoSBYB0>

<sup>27</sup> Hu, S. P. (Ed.). (2003). *Chinese-English-Latin Names of Fauna and Flora (Birds, Mammals, Fishes; Trees, Flowers & Foliages, Vegetables, Fruits & Nuts)*. The Commercial Press. 202, 206.

<sup>28</sup> Ditto, 209

<sup>29</sup> Article of cabbage on *Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/plant/Brassica-oleracea>

<sup>30</sup> Unicode Emoji List, v16.0. <https://unicode.org/emoji/charts/emoji-list.html>